



FEMA

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Congressional Affairs Division
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Congressional Affairs Advisory

Unified Response and Recovery Efforts in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands Continue

*Nearly 10,000 federal personnel on the ground to support Hurricane Maria
response and recovery*

September 25, 2017

The top priority of the federal government is continuing to provide life-saving and life-sustaining resources to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. FEMA and its federal partners continue to conduct 24-hour operations, aggressively conducting search and rescue operations, bringing additional essential commodities to the islands, and restoring power at critical facilities with generators and the fuel needed to power them.

Power has been restored to Centro Medico Hospital in San Juan and San Pablo Hospital in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. Fuel arrived for several hospitals in Puerto Rico: Ashford Presbyterian, Pavia Santurce, Pavia Hato Rey, San Francisco, and Clinica Metro Pavia. The Schneider Regional Medical Center mobile hospital in St. Thomas was re-established.

Nine FEMA Urban Search & Rescue task forces (CA TF-2, TX TF-1, MA TF-1, NY TF-1, CA TF-6, CA TF-7, VA-TF2, FL TF-1 and FL TF-2), are stationed and conducting operations in the Caribbean. VA-TF 1 will be demobilizing today following the conclusion of operations in the U.S. Virgin Islands. FEMA US&R task forces have saved or assisted 516 individuals as of September 25. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) is conducting search and rescue operations in St. Croix, and in the surrounding waters. USCG has saved or assisted 15 individuals.

While significant progress in being made in the response to Hurricane Maria, recovery for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands will be long and frustrating, and will require the help of the whole community. As access to ports, airfields, and roads continue to open, more resources will flow into hard hit areas.

FEMA is raising awareness that Hurricane Maria disaster survivors, and their friends and family, should be alert for false rumors, scams, identity theft, and fraud. FEMA has a dedicated website to address some of the most common themes. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it

probably is. Visit [FEMA's Hurricane Rumor Control page](#) to get the most accurate information from trusted sources.

FEMA encourages all residents to continue following the direction of commonwealth, territorial, and local officials.

To donate or volunteer, contact the voluntary or charitable organization of your choice through the National Voluntary Agencies Active in Disasters (NVOAD) at www.nvoad.org.

Federal Resources On the Ground or En-Route

There are more than 10,000 federal staff, including more than 700 FEMA personnel, on the ground in Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands supporting response and recovery operations from Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

A FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer and Incident Management Assistance Team is co-located with the Governor on St. Croix, as well as liaisons on St. John and St. Thomas. A Federal Coordinating Officer, an Incident Management Assistance Team, as well as permanent and surge staff are in Puerto Rico.

Eight airports are open on Puerto Rico, and two airports in the U.S. Virgin Islands for military and relief flights to bring in commodities, and lifesaving and life-sustaining resources.

The federal government is working with its interagency and private sector partners to support availability, transportation and delivery of fuel, based on priorities identified by Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The federal support for fuel transportation includes air and sea logistical support by the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), U.S. Northern Command, the U.S. Navy, and U.S. Coast Guard, in coordination with the private sector.

The ports of San Juan, Fajardo, Culebra, Guayanilla, and Vieques are open for daylight operations and other ports are undergoing assessments. On St. Thomas, the ports of Crown Bay, Cruz Bay, East Gregerie Channel, Red Hook, and West Gregerie Channel are open with restrictions while other ports are being assessed. On St. Croix, the ports of Krause Lagoon and Limetree Bay are open with restrictions while other ports are being assessed.

FEMA, working in coordination with federal partners, provided more than 1.5 million meals, 1.1 million liters of water, nearly 300 infant and toddler kits, and nearly 12,000 emergency roofing kits to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico since Hurricane Maria's landfall.

Flights and sea vessels loaded with commodities are arriving or awaiting airport/port clearance for delivery:

- Six commercial barges transported and delivered meals, water, generators, cots, and other commodities to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- An air bridge is established, with multiple flights per day to St. Croix and Puerto Rico, transporting more than 100,000 meals daily to each.
- The logistics support ship SS Wright arrived carrying more than 1.1 million meals, and nearly one million liters of freshwater.
- Two shipping barges with 1.2 million liters of water, 31 generators, and more than 6,000 cots arrived in St. Thomas.

- Two additional shipping barges loaded with food, water, and emergency relief supplies are en route to the Caribbean Sea from Florida.
- Millions of additional meals are being flown to Puerto Rico from staging areas in Kentucky and Florida.
- The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) is transporting a shipment of 124,000 gallons of diesel fuel to Puerto Rico, with arrival in the coming days.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an [order](#) on September 24 authorizing FEMA and DoD to install and operate temporary water treatment units to provide clean water in the U.S. Virgin Islands to address concerns about a lack of clean alternative water supplies.

One Mobile Emergency Response Support team (MERS) is in St. Thomas, and one MERS team and one Disaster Emergency Communication Coordinator are on St. Croix assisting personnel with communications.

More than 100 satellite phones will arrive today in Puerto Rico to help with communications needs on the ground.

FEMA's National Business Emergency Operations Center (NBEOC) is facilitating private sector requests for humanitarian relief. The NBEOC continues coordination between government and private sector organizations as the community responds to Hurricanes Maria and Irma.

Other federal agencies are taking the following actions:

- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) operations personnel are onsite in St. Thomas to evaluate, fix, and install FAA equipment, in support of airport operations.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) completed a Blue Roof install on Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas, and completed its first residential Blue Roof install on September 23. Installations began on St. Croix Sunday, September 24.
- Additionally, USACE has 84 generators on hand in Puerto Rico and 27 generators in St. Thomas with more than 50 additional generators en route. USACE and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) continue to survey damaged channels and ports in Puerto Rico. USACE and other supporting agencies have completed several temporary power installs on Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and completed more than 100 inspections.
- A Coast Guard mobile communications convoy is en route to Puerto Rico to help improve communications across the storm-impacted area. Coast Guard personnel continue to deliver critical FEMA relief supplies to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the DoD conducted medical evacuations for more than 100 patients from the islands to the continental United States. Medical evacuations from the islands will continue. Additionally HHS medical teams are on the ground in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

- The National Guard Bureau (NGB) has more than 4,300 Guard members on the ground in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands taking part in security and support operations. The Air National Guard is focused on transporting food, water, and communications capabilities as well as rapidly increasing airlift into affected areas.
- Customs and Border Protection airplanes and helicopters are assisting with conducting damage assessment and search and rescue missions.
- More than 180 Federal Law Enforcement Officers are in San Juan and the U.S. Virgin Islands supporting search and rescue, medical teams, and other federal responders.

Information for Survivors

For those in declared areas and who are able to do so, registering online, at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, is the quickest way to register for FEMA assistance. Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the recent hurricanes.

The American Red Cross [Safe and Well website](#) is a free public reunification tool that allows individuals and organizations to register and post messages to search for loved ones, or for individuals to indicate that they are safe. The site is always available, open to the public, and available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). There are a number of ways to use this service:

- Registrations and searches can be done directly on the [website](#).
- Registrations can also be completed by texting SAFE to 78876. Messages exist in both Spanish and English.
- To speak with someone at the American Red Cross concerning a missing friend or relative who has a serious, pre-existing health or mental health condition, please contact 1-800 Red Cross (1-800-733-2767).
- The American Red Cross [Emergency App](#) features an “I’m Safe” button that allows users to post a message to their social accounts, letting friends and family know they are out of harm’s way. The app can be downloaded for free in app stores by searching for “American Red Cross” or by texting ‘GETEMERGENCY’ to 90999.

Anyone who finds a child who may be separated from parents or caregivers, please contact the local police and enter basic information and/or a photo into the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's [Unaccompanied Minors Registry](#). If you find an unaccompanied child, please indicate whether the child has a disability or has access and functional needs in the appropriate field in the [Unaccompanied Minors Registry](#). If you do not have access to the internet, please call 1-866-908-9570.

Declarations

On September 23, President Trump amended the earlier [major disaster declaration](#) for the U.S. Virgin Islands to make funding available to affected individuals in St. Thomas and St. John, in addition to St. Croix.

On September 20, President Trump issued a [major disaster declaration](#) for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico as a result of Hurricane Maria. This declaration makes federal funding available to affected individuals in 54 municipalities. Federal funding is also available to the Commonwealth and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work in all 78 municipalities in the Commonwealth, along with hazard mitigation measures throughout the Commonwealth.

On September 18, President Trump issued the following federal emergency declarations in advance of Hurricane Maria's landfall:

- [Territory of the U.S. Virgin Islands](#)
- [Commonwealth of Puerto Rico](#)

Rumors, Misinformation and Fraud

Disaster survivors, and their friends and family, should be alert for false rumors, scams, identity theft, and fraud.

Although many Americans are working hard to help their neighbors, during chaotic times, some will always try to take advantage of the most vulnerable.

To dispel some of the false rumors circulating on the internet and social media, FEMA has a dedicated website to address some of the most common themes. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Visit [FEMA's Hurricane Rumor Control page](#) to get the most accurate information from trusted sources.

Here are a few guidelines to protect yourself, or someone you care about, from disaster fraud:

- Federal, territorial, and local workers do not ask for, or accept, money. FEMA staff will never charge applicants for disaster assistance, home inspections, or help filling out applications. Stay alert for false promises to speed up the insurance, disaster assistance, or building permit process.
- In person, always ask to see any FEMA employee ID badges. FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance teams may be in impacted communities providing information and assisting survivors with the registration process or their applicant files.
- A FEMA shirt or jacket is not proof of identity. All FEMA representatives, including our contracted inspectors, will have a laminated photo ID. All National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) adjusters will have an NFIP Authorized Adjuster Card with their name and the types of claims they may adjust.
- If you are unsure or uncomfortable with anyone you encounter claiming to be an emergency management official, do not give out personal information, and contact local law enforcement.

- If you suspect fraud, contact the National Center for Disaster Fraud's hotline at 1-866-720-5721, or email the organization at disaster@leo.gov. You can also report fraud to the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov. Learn more about the National Center for Disaster Fraud at www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud.

Safety

If you encounter flood waters, remember – turn around, don't drown.

Driving through a flooded area can be extremely hazardous. Almost half of all flash flood deaths happen in vehicles. When in your car, look out for flooding in low lying areas, at bridges, and at highway dips. As little as six inches of water may cause you to lose control of your vehicle.

Use extreme caution when entering buildings that may have been damaged.

Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.

Wear sturdy shoes or boots, long sleeves and gloves when handling or walking on or near debris.

Avoid downed power lines or objects in contact with downed lines.

Ensure water is safe to drink, cook or clean with after a flood. Oftentimes a boil water order is put in place following a flood.

Avoid strenuous work during the warmest part of the day. Use a buddy system when working in extreme heat, and take frequent breaks.

Additional information for the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico is available at the following locations:

- www.VIalert.gov (U.S. Virgin Islands)
- USVIupdate.com (U.S. Virgin Islands)
- <http://eldiamenospensado.pr.gov/> (Puerto Rico)
- <http://www2.pr.gov/Pages/Huracan.aspx> (Puerto Rico)
- [Puerto Rico's Federal Affairs Administration](#):
 - By Email: maria1@prfaa.pr.gov
 - By Phone: (202) 800-3133

Additional information regarding Hurricane Maria is available in English and Spanish at:

- fema.gov/hurricane-maria
- Follow FEMA on Twitter @femaregion2
- <https://www.fema.gov/es/huracan-maria>
- <https://twitter.com/FEMAespanol>

If you have any questions, please contact FEMA's Congressional Affairs Division at 202-646-4500.

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

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